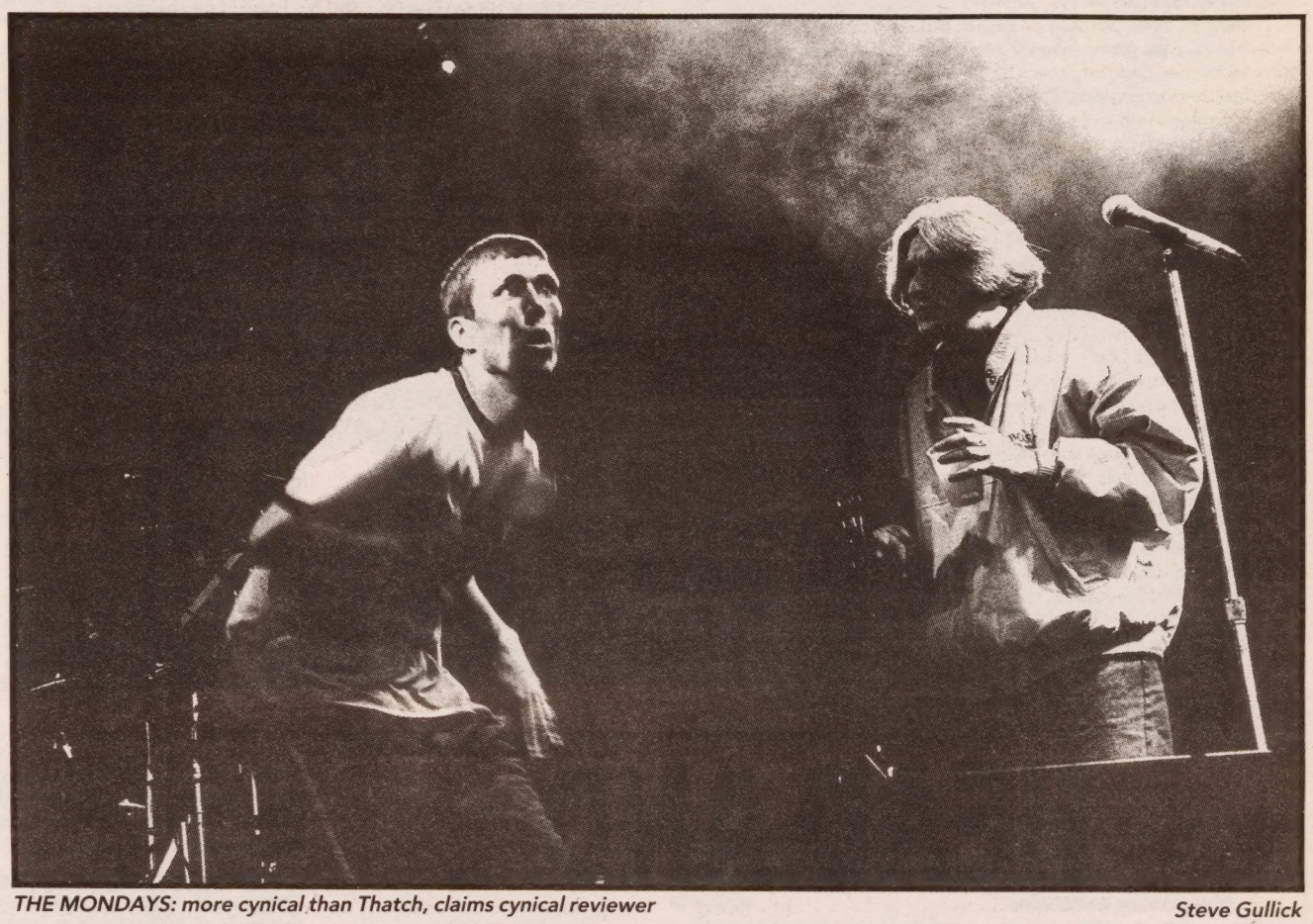
LIVES

Mudchester

The mud, the sweat, the toilets, the traffic jams, more mud. . .this year's CND Festival at Glastonbury had all this plus some weird French dudes who set fire to cars. Oh, and some music too. The *Sounds* cool as muck posse: **Russell Brown, Sam King, Rockford** and **Roy Wilkinson** (words); **Steve Gullick** and **Leo Regan** (pictures)



THE MONDAYS: more cynical than Thatch, claims cynical reviewer *Steve Gullick*

CIRCUS ARCHAOS/HAPPY MONDAYS/GARY CLAIL/JESUS JONES/ADAMSKI/LUSH
Friday

"OK GLASTONBURY are you ready for this? Let me hear you make some noise, are you ready for Adamski? Are you ready, we got Manchester vibes in the area with the most massive sound of Adamski. Are you ready for the serious sound, coming up a little later, the Manchester vibe of the Happy Mondays? Are you ready? Let me hear you make some noise."

I am in hell. After hours of travelling, miles of walking and fields of congealed, sodden earth, the last thing I expected to contend with was the shit from Spike Island. Yet here he is, live and direct as he would say, fronting Adamski – Mr DJ in-the-area.

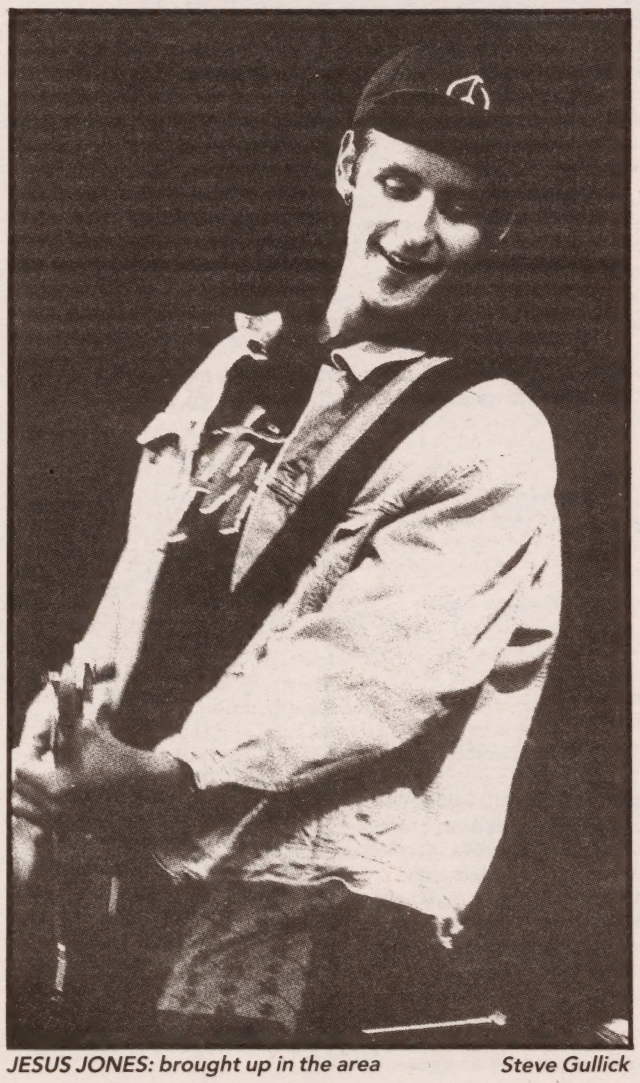
Quite what he's up to is uncertain. Aside from leaping about and reminding us that we are listening to "the most massive sound of Adamski", all he does is shout a lot about the "Manchester vibe in the area". I have to admit I'm intrigued, not least because I thought Adamski was from North London. What is this mythical "Manchester vibe", where do you get it from and if I pay him enough money will Mr DJin-the-area take it all away?

Adamski himself is lost somewhere stage right behind Mr DJ's not inconsiderable ego. Live, without the backup of a vocalist, he's lost, his dweebly post-Acid piano motifs just aural confetti among the hoots and brays of the afternoon audience. Listening at home it's easy to see how songs like 'Killer', with its blend of Pet Shop Boys' pop structure and hip dance aesthetic, can be so successful. In a field, however, he's little more than an anaemic electric dwarf with a couple of synthesisers to hide behind.

Earlier on, before the onset of DJ Vibes, Lush had stumbled on to the pyramid stage and rattled through a couple of songs only to discover that Emma's guitar wasn't actually plugged in. With professionalism so high on their agenda, it's probably just as well that most of the audience were still reliving the trauma of the previous night's muddy downpour.

In contrast to Adamski, Jesus Jones are totally at home – not least because Mike Edwards was brought up just outside the area – although there's always a sneaking suspicion they've been overtaken by the musical events of the last year. Indeed, many of their older songs, 'Bring It On Down', 'Move Mountains' and 'Song 13' seem like ancient history. Even the newer material like this year's 'Real Real Real' are running on last year's fuel.

Despite this, Jesus Jones refuse to give in. Their latest songs owe more to the Beatles' wild years than they do to the work of influences like De La Soul or Public Enemy. The provisionally titled 'Winston' and the obviously political 'Welcome Back Victoria' are the closest things to 'Sgt Pepper' since Tears For Fears' 'Seeds Of Love', all spongey rock textures and mantra-like vocals. Unlike Adamski, DJ Vibes and record spinner Paul Oakenfold, Edwards gives the illusion of being energetic, occasionally going so far as to actually leap about.



JESUS JONES: brought up in the area *Steve Gullick*

Like Jesus Jones, Gary Glail, who's halfway between a band and a DJ depending on where he's playing, appears to be enthused by the event. His choice of records and his mixing abilities are in direct contrast to the laziness that typifies the work of rentajocks like the dismal Oakenfold. The latter may be able to put one record after another (usually his own) on the turntable, but someone really should tell him about fade-ins and cross-mixing.

The Mondays themselves are the epitome of both the purposefully dull attitudes apparent today and the much touted "Manchester vibe". They've elevated disinterest, sloth and laziness to the level of an art form, gaining audiences in direct proportion to their own increasing lack of interest.

With their sporadic, condensed set, Happy Mondays again show why they are the single most exasperating band in Britain. They look as though they're cynically going through the motions, minimum effort, maximum pay-off. Shaun and Bez in particular appear lifeless and bored, the former's voice lost within the strictly enforced low volume sound, the latter's dancing skills reduced to the odd shoulder shrug here and there.

Yet despite this, the songs themselves are immaculate. 'Do It Better', with its spastic doubletalk and lilting guitar chitter, is superb, while 'Lazyitis', 'Wrote For Luck', 'Step On' and 'Hallelujah' roll us over like hardened traders out to wring every penny from their marks. Even the new song, which may or may not have anything to do with Shaun's rumoured solo single, is instantly gripping.

It's hard to know where to stand. Do we simply praise the band who've done more than a decade of Thatcherism to spread the idea of cynical, slovenly market mugging as a virtue, or else mourn a group who could, quite seriously, have the world in their pocket if only they'd try harder? Like The Stone Roses at Spike Island, Happy Mondays let themselves down with a lack of ambition. A little more effort and they could revolutionise the entire world of rock music, instead they've just decided to sack it.

Circus Archaos are also uncertain where they stand. Are they just a dreary French rock band – a sort of less interesting Mano Negra – with a few circus stunts thrown in or are they a circus set to music? The pair don't go together too well but Archaos make the most of it.

Certainly they have their moments. The two cars that have been balanced on top of the Pyramid Stage all day are thrown to the ground, but sadly rumours that they would be blown up prove unfounded. Ultimately, they're dwarfed by the surroundings and there's no room for their much vaulted chainsaw juggling on motorbikes. Instead we have to make do with a few fireworks and the odd explosion – hardly the blow out we were all waiting for. SK

THE CURE/SINÉAD O'CONNOR/DE LA SOUL/DEL AMITRI/JAMES/BOO-YAA TRIBE
Saturday

GOOD MORNING campers, time to shake a leg and breakfast with Boo-Yaa. It's a big hats off to the organisers, for what could be better than to start another festival day with these cheery, happy-go-lucky types, the Boo-Yaa TRIBE? First up on the Pyramid stage we have several tons of fun – authors of such singalong faves as 'Once Upon A Drive-By' and other memorable ditties from the hard-but-fair world of LA gang slayings. Charitable types too – members of the Campaign for Numerous Dismemberments to a (gun)man.

As the state of their bodies might indicate, the Boo-Yaa's piledriver funk is workout music. There's a direct comparison between the time and effort put into acquiring those torsos and the practice bash into this pressure-cooker funk attack. Ultimately the same limitations apply. Like a neurotically over-toned body, Boo-Yaa can't help but grab your attention, but in the end that's all they do. If it wasn't for the background and appearance of these Middle-Aged Mutilating Ninja Turtles, it's unlikely that this artisan dance music would've gained much attention. Similarly, if it wasn't for the theatrics – the mikestand bending, the guitarist carried aloft for his 'Purple Haze' chops – this would be a dull show. Not for nothing do they end by shouting "Bang Your Head". This is the black equivalent of pyrotechnic vaudevillean metal.

James first hit the Glastonbury trail five years ago in the good old days when there was a second pop stage. Then they were being fitted out for that durable pigeonhole, veggie-moonie Moz proteges. Half a decade down the line they're busting away from the lord of stage celibacy, and how. As if asking 'How Was It For You?' with enough sauce to become a house band in some where-your-trousers Brit sit-com wasn't enough, a couple of weeks ago, singer Tim Booth was posing with "Come" scrawled on his chest. No way are they virgins, like. But hang on, didn't that Morrissey bloke

JAMES: how was it for you lot, then? *Leo Regan*

LIVES

vibes in the area

used to write stuff on his chest?

Today, as ever, James are good, but not, despite the best intentions, that good. 'Hymn From A Village', 'Scarecrow', 'Come Home' and 'Sit Down' roar out like the monsters they are, but James just don't have enough invincible dizbusters to maintain flame-on over the full 90 minutes. For all Tim's puppet-shaman choreography and ceaseless search for an ecstatic state, half the time James' groove is leaden, the frenzy forced.

After the occasionally sublime it's time for the consistently ridiculous – before we get De La Soul we get De La Mitri or, for an even higher wit quotient, De L'Assholes.

Really, they should've been forced to line up alongside Deacon Blue and Hothouse Flowers on Sunday's Official Musical Nuremburg War Crimes Day. As it is, Del Amitri pop in with their ersatz Levis 'n' plasti-Stones raunch on Saturday – just to take the heat off Jim Leighton and remind us that Scotland has produced things even more questionable than their goalkeepers.

De La Soul deserve some kind of Action Community Award For The Kids, such is their on-site destruction of racial stereotyping. When the other dominant black presences at Glastonbury are the Boo-Yaas toting a comedy reprise of ghetto violence and 1001 geezers pushing Range Rovers, cellphones and blackashspeedandacid, De La Soul's flowered-up laff-o-logical rap irony becomes even more revolutionary.

What's more, they succeed with a taped, daytime showing where the previous day Adamski had limped along like a reject from *A Clockwork Orange* press-ganged onto *The Hitman And Her*. There wasn't anything groundbreaking about De La's tactics – just a bunch of massively insidious toons and involving the massive, fervent crowd in some seasoned showbiz call-and-response. 'Potholes In My Lawn', 'Magic Number' and 'Jenifa Taught Me' give them a jumpstart and if it sags a bit in the middle with a excess of crowd chants, 'Say No Go' and 'Me Myself And I' give them a revitalising top up. Encouragingly this '90s beat produces surging audience enthusiasm where Del Amitri garnered the most indifference of the day.

No bitchin' in a tutu from S O'Connor today. But in leatha 'n' shades, Sinéad manages to pile up much more jarring juxtaposition than her boot 'n' beauty combination ever did. Check Howard Devoto's baldy stick insect routine, Angie Bowie's miming ability and ELO's string section. Oh and the voice of the odd dozen heavenly choirs.

Such is Sinéad's weight of insecurity refracted into an over-compensating honesty and overwrought autobiography, that O'Connor can be the most awkward, affected presence. Then that voice saves the day. Then that band – exponents of that new-fangled pub rock lark – snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. The advances and reverses pile up so rapidly as to twist you between pure antipathy and admiration in a breath.

At best, though – with the hip hop and jig-gery pokery of 'I Am Stretched On Your Grave' – she's stunning. And whatever the barbs of ridiculous self meditation that stick in the throat, that voice is always going to be worth perservering for. God, for one, is on Sinéad's side.

By any norm of pop life expectancy, The Cure should be on their last legs by now. Far from it. Despite now being standards on the intercontinental stadium circuit, this band show no apparent senility. Playing things at their own slobbish pace, The Cure retain their edge. Robert Smith, despite a steadying of weight that suggests he is no longer trying to battle Maxwell for the Biggest Bob title, is the most sought-after star on the site and his band is probably now better than ever.

By 'Catch' the crowd is a packed, soiled mass of writhing limbs and dry-ice clouds of evaporating water. Tragedy almost strikes when a girl is dragged limp from the crowd. While medics pump her chest and lay on oxygen, a cop 'copter flies in to evacuate her. It looks very grim for a while, but then Bob is able to follow up the Cameroon-Costa Rica scoreline with news of her recovery. The show resumes in earnest.

All the hits, all the anthemic FX charges, all the introspection OD. No suprises really, but this is the best show of the weekend. Toward the end they knock into 'Primary', 'A Forest', '10.15' and 'Killing An Arab'. Way cool, klassic kuts and the most atrocious make-up wearers in the history of showbiz. Well done, Bob. RW

ASWAD/RY COODER/DEACON BLUE/HOTHOUSE FLOWERS/MANO NEGRA

Sunday

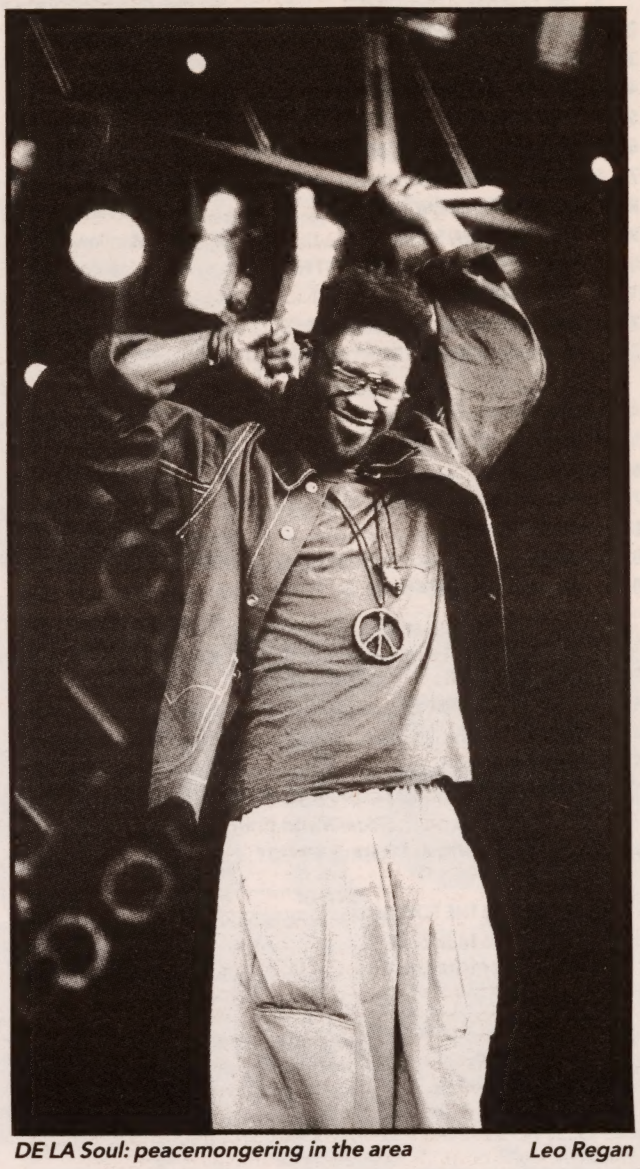
A POLICE presence intent on giving everyone first-hand experience of what it must have felt like to be an England supporter in Sardinia meant that anyone arriving on Sunday was greeted with the advice, "Sorry mate, no-one's getting in, everyone's leaving". This highly constructive attitude meant that World Party had their work cut out convincing the police they should be let in and were only just allowed to play, albeit a curtailed set. Needless to say the journalistic contingent following them were delayed even more and missed a reportedly crowd winning set.

Sunday at Glastonbury is definitely reserved for the hardened festival goers, the majority of the pop kids having long since made good their escape while the rest are left to become one with the mud. It is also becoming a tradition for the last day's music to reflect this, with a more deep-rooted selection of World Music styles guaranteed to lift flagging spirits. Mano Megra fit the bill admirably. A large group of demented Frenchmen led by a guitar-wielding dude stripped to the waist move through every musical genre under the sun from gentle folk to Beastie Boy rap pastiche. Every song takes a different style but is held together by boistrous energy and a skillful use of back-up percussion and brass – definitely worth a return visit.

Coming one after the other, it transpires that there's no fundamental difference between Hothouse Flowers' lightweight Irish rock or Deacon Blue's lightweight Scottish pop. They both try far too hard to transcend the limitations of their material to win over the afternoon crowd.

Hothouse Flowers, surprisingly, turn out to be by far the least successful of the two. The whole band appear to have dressed themselves from one of the multitude of stalls around the site and come on like Joseph wearing his many colours. They take a big risk with one final attempt to overcome the cloudy skies by covering Johnny Nash's 'I Can See Clearly Now' and encouraging the crowd to sing "*It's gonna be a bright, bright, sunshining day*". Had this band been destined for the heights of U2 the sun would have come out. It didn't and they aren't.

Deacon Blue on the other hand win over the crowd in no uncertain terms, this despite the fact that Ricky Ross is a bit of a prat but doesn't seem to care as long as it serves his purpose. They also come armed with a batch of familiar songs – 'Wages Day', 'Raintown' and 'Real Gone Kid', the latter producing enough unsolicited whoops from the audience to prove the band were getting the desired result. They encore



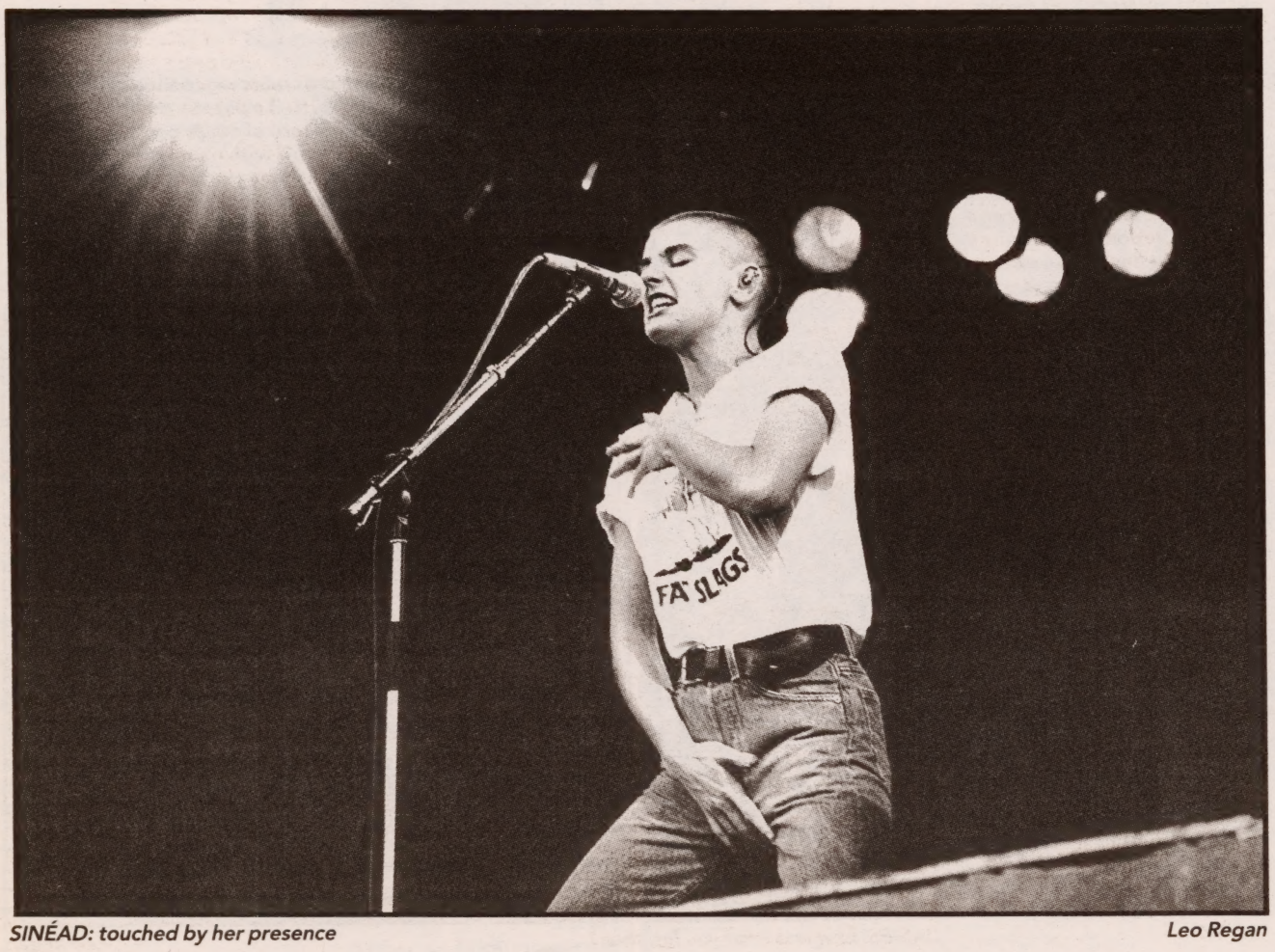
DE LA Soul: peacemongering in the area *Leo Regan*

with that song where Ricky asks the audience what he should call his Dinghy and they unanimously respond with 'Dignity'. He expresses his disappointment about missing the football to be here but can console himself with this rare Scottish victory.

Ry Cooder's unassuming performance, aided by his side-kick David Lindley, turns out special and as if to prove that this is the real McCoy the sun does actually find a gap in the clouds to shine through. We may not really be in the presence of God, but the thinned-out crowd that have stayed put for this moment, are treated to an eerie, elongated version of 'Vigilante Man' preceeded by Lindley's bowed guitar and a sing-a-long version of 'It's All Over Now'. Cooder's most impressive recent work has been his soundtrack recordings and at Glastonbury his music strikes just the right chord.

Aswad are unfortunately becoming the ultimate college ball band, able to string together a set of past hit singles and inoffensive reggae that is guaranteed to get the most reticent of wallflowers dancing. They're the ideal catalyst as the party gets into its final swing but it's not until the encore of 'Get Up Stand Up' that they give the event any political edge or show they are more than just a token reggae band destined for a residency on Saturday morning kids TV.

There may be more to follow but the all-night raving on Friday and Saturday has taken its toll and seems a good opportunity to hit the road and head for home, wondering whether Sunday was a good day for this world party. R



SINÉAD: touched by her presence *Leo Regan*

MAN ON THE TERRACE

AND SO, once a year, the Man On The Terrace becomes the Fool On The Hill, where the bar is in his backpack and the toilets are a long walk to purgatory. . .

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Glastonbury is the urge to forgive, forget and have a good time – and damn the mud. And the rain, and the delays and the *eight hour* traffic jam that greeted Thursday night's arrivals. These things do not matter.

What matters is the variety, the tranquility, and the madness of Saturday night, where groups of friends totter round the borders of insanity at a party the size of a small city, doing things that deny rational explanation. The big-name music is but a passing consideration – and that's what will always put Glastonbury ahead of tawdry affairs like Reading. My thanks go out to The Cure for taking 30,000 nerds out of circulation for much of Saturday's party, leaving the rest of us free to seek kicks at the World Stage (where Courtney Pine was simply ravishing), the sound systems (serious madness in the area), or pretty well anywhere.

With rave culture's unlikely conversion to festival values, this year's Glastonbury was bigger, crazier and more crowded than ever before – and perhaps there lies the problem. How big can it get? How many police will be there next year? Will the underpowered Pyramid stage ever be a pleasant place to see a major band again? Humanity, Glastonbury's trump card, is in danger of being overplayed. But hell, I had a *great* time. . . RB